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ABSTRACT

The University 101 concept as a method for improving university teaching and learning is described, with emphasis on the faculty training program, although the approach also includes a three-credit-hour freshman orientation course. The structure, content, outcomes, and research findings on the University 101 program are examined. The approach was originally developed at the University of South Carolina and has been replicated at other institutions. University 101 has provided faculty training through its 40 hour training workshops for over 400 faculty and professional staff. The faculty training is divided into four phases: building group trust, identifying learning objectives, interaction with learning resources, and linking with experienced University 101 faculty. The program is designed to integrate faculty and professional staff in an effort that is both academic and humanistic in its orientation in order to reduce the barriers between them at the university. The program is also designed to sensitize faculty members to the needs and problems of students in general and freshmen in particular. Faculty members who have completed the 40 hour training teach the University 101 course, "The Student in the University," that is offered to freshmen. (SW)

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University 101: A Concept for Improving University Teaching and Learning

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UNIVERSITY 101: A CONCEPT FOR IMPROVING UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The basic purpose of this paper is to describe the University 101 concept as a method for improving university teaching and learning. University 101 is an eight year old academic program which includes two basic components: a faculty development training program and a three credit hour freshman orientation course. The central focus of this paper will be on the faculty training program.

Specifically, this paper will present a practical and developmental model, including structure, content, outcomes, and research findings on an award winning program entitled University 101 orginally developed at the University of South Carolina and now replicated at other institutions such as the State University of New York at Plattsburgh, Clarion State College (Pennsylvania), Georgia College, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Southern Conneticut State College. University 101, because of its mission to improve university teaching, has provided faculty training through its forty hour training workshops for over four hundred faculty and professional staff and the course has provided instruction for approximately 10,000 students who have demonstrated a significantly higher retention rate than those students who have not taken the course. University 101 is the recipient of the Award for the "Outstanding Institutional Innovative Program", bestowed by the National Association of Student Personnel Adminstrators, 1977.

Is it possible in a time of retrenchment in higher education that a single, inexpensive program can positively influence: faculty development, student retention, student orientation, and utilization of student support services, while simultaneously increasing revenues? Participants and researchers at the University of South Carolina are firmly convinced that an academic program entitled "University 101" has achieved such highly desirable outcomes. The purpose of this paper will be to elaborate on the program concept of University 101 and its unique faculty training program which address the conference theme of faculty development.

Specifically, this paper will present a practical and developmental model, including structure, content, outcomes, and research findings, on an award

winning program entitled, University 101, developed at the University of South Carolina and now replicated at other institutions of higher education. Of most fundamental relevance to this Conference, University 101 is a faculty development program at the University of South Carolina for improving university teaching. It is also a program for accomplishing extended orientation for academic credit, for increasing student retention, and most importantly, for accomplishing human development of all humans involved: students, staff, and faculty.

Still more specifically, what then is University 101? University 101 is an academic program consisting of a three credit hour course and a related faculty/staff development training program. The course, called University 101 "The Student in the University," is an academic, continuing, orientation, elective, pass/fail course, restricted to freshmen. It is taught in small groups of approximately 20 - 25 freshmen by specially trained faculty and staff who have received their training, jointly, in a 40 hour, mandatory, preparatory, workshop. University 101 has been in existence for eight years and has a participating faculty and staff now of approximately 300 drawn from all academic disciplines and administrative units of the University of South Carolina's nine campuses. Through University 101 instruction has been provided for over 8,500 students from 1972 to 1980 on the Columbia campus of the University and hundreds more on the other campuses of the University.

The course is designed to accomplish a number of objectives: providing an extensive orientation to the purposes of higher education, in general, and an orientation to this University in particular; helping freshmen to adjust to the University and develop more positive attitudes towards the University and the learning process; improving the retention rate of freshmen; and giving faculty and staff special preparation to teach the course which would expose them to new and perhaps more effective ways of communicating subject matter to University undergraduates, especially freshmen, and making them (both students and faculty) more knowledgeable about their university and its services and

resources to assist student development. Since its beginning as an educational experiment in 1972 and its subsequent institutionalization, University 101 has been most carefully researched and monitored by researchers who have been completely independent of the program itself. This research has found that participation in University 101 is positively correlated with significantly higher retention of freshmen even when the freshmen taking the course have been found to be initially less well qualified, academically, than those students who do not take the course. Thus, students who have a lower predicted potential for survival are surviving at a significantly higher rate than those with higher predicted GPR's, that is, if they take University 101.[1] Simultaneously, University 101 has proved to be extremely effective in promoting retention of "undeclared majors", a group of students who are high-risk retention problems.[2] This research has also demonstrated that University 101 is significantly associated with an increased knowledge and utilization of student support services by University 101 students.[3] Finally, the program has been found to be extremely cost effective.[4]

Of central interest to participants at a conference on faculty development would be the background and content of the University 101 Faculty Training Workshops, a goal of which is to improve university teaching. University 101 was originally the result of faculty and presidential efforts to revitalize the freshmen year at the University of South Carolina. This came in the aftermath of violent student riots on a deep South conservative campus in 1970 following the United States' invasion of Cambodia. The University president had become convinced that behaviorial sciences offered a number of possible answers to alleviate many problems in higher education. The faculty and the president who were developing University 101 visualized that the course would simultaneously impact student retention, promote faculty development, and "humanize the university environment."

> It was in that spirit of "humanization" that University 101 was developed. It was an attempt to gain one form of relevance

> by making the teacher, the person, a relevant experience for the student. It was designed as an opportunity to see a person as they work, in their work. It was the granting of access to a combination of cognitive and affective experiences in a single course framework that allowed the student to grow through personal interchange, after first having removed the affective blocks to learning. The desired result was a student open and available to the acquisition of knowledge and the further application of that knowledge in his or her personal growth and experience (Heckel, Hiers, Finegold, and Zuidema, 1972).

When the course was originally developed it was a less publicized agenda of the grand designer of the course, a former President[5] of the University of South Carolina, to provide through the course's faculty training program a faculty development experience for faculty who were in need of such! Now, however, because of its successful acceptance by the faculty, University 101 is represented to faculty and staff as being essentially for them, a faculty development experience. There are thus a number of demonstrated outcomes for faculty and staff as follows:

1. They receive a unique faculty development experience when they complete the mandatory 40 hour faculty training workshop which is a preparatory experience for teaching the course. In the workshop they learn many new teaching techniques, especially focusing on techinques which will enable them to function more effectively in small groups with students. In fact, many faculty are now participating in the program exclusively for the faculty training experience. In essence, the training program seeks to develop "affective" skills in faculty (to complement their cognitive skills). Very much like the students, the faculty develop a support group in the University 101 experience. Because the program draws its faculty from across all discipline and departmental lines, it has the effect of pulling together kindred souls from all areas of the university to make friends with each other and develop both personal and professional relationships. This enables many people to meet each other who otherwise might not have contact because of the very differing nature of

their duties at a large university like this one. In fact, program members occasionally joke about having a "101 Mafia" because of the supportive network that develops and infiltrates into every organizational unit of the university system. This support group also enables faculty to generalize and expand their University 101 teaching innovations beyond the confines of the course and into their regular teaching and work at the university.

2. In the training program especially, and as they teach the course, the faculty, like the students, learn much more about the institution. This is especially helpful for new faculty who join the university and have some orientation problems not at all dissimilar to those of students.

3. The program integrates faculty and professional staff at the university in a joint undertaking which is both academic and humanistic in its orientation. This tends to reduce the barriers between the faculty and staff camps at the university and also reduces the stereotyping that both these groups do about each other. At the University of South Carolina the extensive participation of faculty and staff in this common program has promoted much better relationships between faculty and especially Student Affairs staff. As a testimonial to this, the University 101 program was awarded in 1977 the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Region III, Award for the "Outstanding Institutional Innovative Program".

4. University 101 sensitizes faculty to both the needs and problems of students in general and especially those of freshmen.

5. University 101 provides for many faculty a rejuvenating experience.

6. University 101 has thus formed at the University of South Carolina

a large faculty and staff group committed to the common goal of humanistically supporting students and this, in turn, reinforces these same faculty and staff for caring about freshmen.[6]

In order to more appropriately illustrate how the above enumerated outcomes of the University 101 faculty training experience are achieved, it is appropriate to include the theory and content behind the University 101 Faculty Training Program for improving university teaching. This has best been described previously by this author and several of his collagues who were responsible for developing this training program as written in Fidler et al:

> In order to prepare University faculty and staff for teaching roles within the University 101 program, a carefully designed training program has been developed. The theoretical roots of the University 101 faculty training are based on an experiential learning model which owes much to Carl Rogers (1969), Earl Kelley (1951), and Malcolm Knowles (1972). University 101 faculty trainers see themselves as facilitators who set an atmosphere of openness, trust, and flexibility. Although the University 101 faculty training that has evolved at USC is grounded in these theoretical notions, the model itself is a product of the trainers from the University. Bandura's (1977) social learning concept provides another theoretical base. The trainers model behavior which can be used by University 101 faculty when conducting their own classes. The same stages of group development occur in the training and the appropriate or requisite roles must evolve in order that faculty learners move from dependency to self-direction in both the training and in the regular course. The faculty training process is not similar to so-called sensitivity or encounter groups, even though some personal disclosure and affective expression occur.
>
> Training for University 101 is sometimes described as preparation for conducting the "course you always wanted to teach" but have not had the freedom or opportunity to do so. During the training, the applicability of University 101 teaching techniques and procedures to other academic classes is stressed because the workshop training is viewed as a comprehensive faculty development experience which may be generalized to most learning settings. Development of the faculty is further enhanced by the sharing of teaching ideas and techniques, the interactions of faculty and staff from many disciplines, and the recognition of unique resources and potentially problem solving capabilities available from within the extremely heterogeneous group of professional trainees. Experience has shown that the University 101 faculty training is effective for individuals from different academic disciplines who fill numerous roles in the university community - staff, faculty, deans, vice presidents, presidents, and members of the Board of Trustees. At the University of South Carolina, the most appropriate time for workshop training has been during

either summer school or Christmas holidays. University 101 faculty are not compensated for participating in the training.

In order to attain the training goals numerous techniques and resources are drawn from the field of group dynamics. Selected exercises from the Human Potential Seminars (McHolland and Trueblood, 1972) as well as the Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training (Pfeiffer and Jones, 1975), provide excellent experiential activities for learning. In addition, trainer developed exercises and mini lectures are also employed.

The faculty training is of 40 hours duration and is divided into four phrases: (1) building group trust, (2) identifying learning objectives, (3) interaction with learning resources, and (4) linking with experienced University 101 faculty.

Building Group Trust. The objective of the first training phase is to increase group cohesiveness and the level of trust among participants. This objective is accomplished through sharing of personal biographies, clarifying values, and disclosing reasons for entering higher education as well as University 101 training. These sharing activities are utilized to provide common experience among the trainees. Resulting communication becomes more open and participants more accepting and sensitive to feedback.

Identification of Learning Objectives. Phase two includes processes whereby learning objectives for the workshop are developed by each individual and the training group. Usually, these objectives include learning additional teaching skills, learning more about freshmen student needs, and discovering campus and community resources available to help students.

Interaction with Learning Resources. During the third phase trainees interact with University personnel who represent various campus resources. Representives of campus student services meet with small groups of trainees to explain their activities. The emphasis is on sharing information and establishing positive new relationships in order that the trainees will freely utilize these resources in the future. Experienced University 101 faculty also participate in the training workshop with small groups of current trainees. They report successes and failures, exchange teaching approaches, and offer appropriate suggestions.

Linking with Experienced University 101 Faculty. The merger of new University 101 trainees with experienced faculty is the goal of phase four. This linkage develops a new group which provides continuous support for University 101 faculty after the workshop training has terminated. Approximately a month after the semester begins, a series of University 101 faculty luncheon meetings begin. In addition to offering an opportunity to socialize, the luncheons provide occasions where the faculty can share their progress and problems in the teaching of University 101.

Over the eight years in which these workshops have been offered, the training program has undergone continuous evaluations and revisions. As with any University 101 class, the training experience remains

dynamic and responsive to the individual and group needs.[7]

Thanks to the student riots in the late 1960's and an unusual, visionary president, with the continuing support of successive progressive presidential administrators, the University of South Carolina began to make changes in institutional structures that affected freshmen long before the end of the baby boom was in sight and before that institution had any kind of significant concern for retention. Now, however, most of us in higher education no longer have that luxury. Now higher education must make changes if it is to survive in anything resembling its present form. Thus, the student has finally become a more precious commodity and institutions must now concern themselves with making their students more effective learners so that, if nothing else, they can be retained and budgets preserved. University 101 is one response that addresses this situation without simultaneously necessitating unethical educational practices and/or the simultaneous lowering of standards. It is the argument of those involved in University 101 at the University of South Carolina that student retention cannot be improved until faculty change their attitudes, values, and particularly their behaviors in the classroom, and until certain institutional structures are developed to help students make more successful adjustments to a university. Post secondary education must take into account the steady state, declining enrollment, and the need for more faculty and student development. In that spirit, University 101 is offered as a tested, replicable, model for humanistically oriented faculty growth, with numerous additional institutional benefits. University 101 is a response to this challenge and to the challenge of improving university teaching.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Paul P. Fidler, "University 101 Evaluation 1974-79 Research Questions and Findings", a study published by the Division of Student Affairs, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, 1979, Table I.

[2]Ibid., p. 1.

[3]Ibid., Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

[4]Paul P. Fidler, John N. Gardner, J. Manning Hiers, John E. Zuidema and David L. Meabon, "University 101: A Model for Student and Faculty Development." Paper presented at the 1978 National Conference on Higher Education, sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education, Chicago, March 21, 1978, p. 24.

[5]Dr. Thomas F. Jones was President of the University of South Carolina from 1962-1974, and is now Vice President for Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The current President of the University of South Carolina is Dr. James B. Holderman.

[6]John N. Gardner, "How to Make Students More Effective Consumers of Their Education: University 101 at the University of South Carolina," Southern College Personnel Association Journal, Summer 1978, pp. 63-64.

[7]Fidler, pp. 10-14.

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